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The situation in the Middle East

Elimination of racism and racial discrimination

Security Council
Fifty-fifth year

Letter dated 31 March 2000 from the Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In my capacity as Chairman of the Arab Group for the month of March 2000 and on behalf of the members of the League of Arab States, I have the honour to convey to you hereby the comments of the Arab Group on the substance of the letter dated 16 March 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (A/54/799-S/2000/220).

The letter of the Permanent Representative of Israel makes tendentious statements concerning the Arab States, their leaders and their information media and does so with the aim of inverting the true state of affairs, attempting to mislead world public opinion and distorting the image of the Arab States and the history of the just and honourable struggle of their peoples with a view to undermining their solidarity and their legitimate rights. Those statements also seek to cloak Israel's constant acts of aggression and its unlawful practices as illustrated by the fact that occupation and aggression, the building of settlements, the expropriation of land, the attempted Judaization of Jerusalem and repressive practices against Arab citizens in the occupied Palestinian territory and the other occupied Arab territories are all still continuing.

The Israeli representative deliberately overlooks the fact that the major and fundamental reason for the condemnation of Israel and its abuses that has recently been voiced at the inter-Arab and international levels is the shelling and bombing of innocent civilians in Lebanon by Israel and the consequent killing of children and women and destruction of Lebanese infrastructure. In his letter, the Israeli representative also fails to mention the statement made by his Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Knesset and to correspondents for the world's news agencies that his Government was prepared to "burn the soil of Lebanon" and to kill its children. Such statements coming from an official Israeli personage, quite apart from the accompanying propaganda campaign waged by the Israeli media, constitute indeed

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the most heinous form of racism, malice and hatred and inflame the sentiments of the Arab peoples.

Israel bears responsibility for the consequences of the historic injustice done to the more than four million Palestinians who remain, as at this moment, banished from their homeland. There are also violations that have gone beyond all bounds, such as the massacres of Palestinians in Dayr Yasin (Deir Yassin) and Kafr Qasim (Kafr Kassem) and in other villages that have been totally destroyed, as well as the displacement of the more than half a million Syrian Arabs who await the day they can return to their land in the occupied Syrian Golan. In southern Lebanon, perpetrating massacres became an everyday policy for successive Israeli governments. This included attacks on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and the repeated shelling of the Lebanese civilians who took refuge in the UNIFIL compound in Qana, which took the lives of more than 100 such civilians — children, elderly persons and women. What is most disturbing in reading the letter of the Israeli representative is that he wants his Government to continue to commit all manner of aggression and murder and to prevent the victims from even protesting and from demanding a halt to the killing and respect for the international rule of law. It is this, in fact, that has been conveyed by the demonstrations held by Arab citizens in recent times.

Throughout their long history, the Arabs have never been other than advocates of peace and brotherhood among peoples. The divinely inspired messages that have gone forth from their land to the other parts of the world contained all the ideals of love, solidarity and the highest human values. Events have demonstrated that what is preventing the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East is the fact that Israel in continuing deliberately to violate the Charter of the United Nations, the norms of public international law, international humanitarian law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) call upon Israel to withdraw from the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and from the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967, and resolution 425 (1978) requires Israeli forces to withdraw forthwith and unconditionally from Lebanese territory. A just and comprehensive peace can never be compatible with the logic of Israel maintaining its occupation of and aggression against Arab territories and its failure to comply with the principle of land for peace.

I urge you, on behalf of the permanent representatives of the States members of the League of Arab States, to see to it that the United Nations meets its historical, political and legal responsibilities with respect to the implementation of its resolutions and that all possible forms of pressure be brought to bear on the Government of Israel to halt its inhuman and unlawful practices in the occupied Arab territories and comply with the provisions of the Charter, the international rule of law and the resolutions of the United Nations.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 43 and 114, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Mohammad J. **Samhan**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
Chairman of the Arab Group